Water is life, particularly for women

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"Water is Life", said a woman standing at the bank of a dried riverbed in a remote, rural community in Northwestern Kenya. In the shade behind her sat a group of about 25 other women from the community, several with children on their laps or on their backs. When the woman said, "water is life", I assumed she meant that water is necessary for survival. She meant water is 'her' life. The women in the group also shared insights supporting this sentiment. Water work takes their full day; they wake up early thinking of their household water needs, including what they need for drinking, cooking, cleaning, and bathing. Some walk for hours to get to the riverbed and back, carrying heavy and awkwardly shaped jerry cans on their heads, and navigating steep hillsides as they go. Water collection, they added, is harder - though no less necessary -Â when they are pregnant or have just given birth.

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